

Early College High School Program Summary Report, 2018–2019

Early College High School (ECHS) provides students with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and 60 college hours, which lead to an associate’s degree. The program provides dual-credit course opportunities at no cost to students. High school students may enroll in dual-credit courses and earn academic credits recognized by the high school and by higher education institutions. In addition, the program provides academic and social support services to help students succeed academically and complete high school, to increase college readiness, and to reduce barriers to college access.

Students from backgrounds under represented in postsecondary institutions (e.g., ethnic minorities, students with low socio-economic status, students at risk, English learners, and students with a learning disability) were recruited to enroll in the program. In 2018–2019, ECHS operated in seven high schools (i.e., Crockett, Eastside Memorial, Lanier, LBJ, Reagan, and Travis) and was implemented in partnership with Austin Community College (ACC). More information about ECHS is provided in the side-bar on page 2.

This report describes demographic characteristics and academic outcomes of the students served, highlights emerging topics from the teacher and program staff surveys, and provides general recommendations for future program implementation.

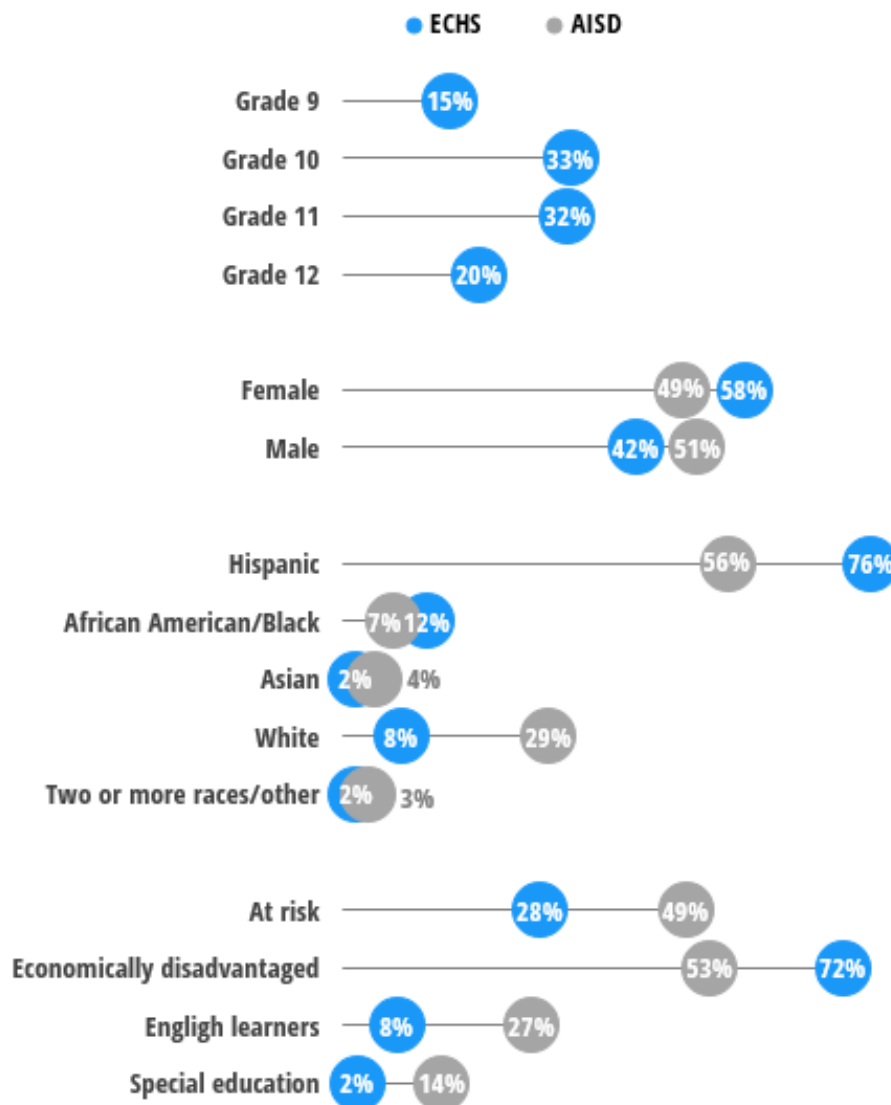
DEMOGRAPHICS

Most of the 773 high school students who participated in ECHS, were Hispanic and/or economically disadvantaged, which met the Texas Education Agency (TEA) criteria for ECHS implementation. In 2018–2019, some student groups were represented at higher rates in the ECHS Program than what was observed in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) student body overall. More specifically, 76% of the students were Hispanic, 12% were African American, and 72% were economically disadvantaged (Table 1). However, English learners, students with disabilities, and students classified as at risk were underrepresented among ECHS students. Lastly, 15% of ECHS students were in 9th grade, 62% were in 10th grade, 33% were in 11th grade, and 20% were in 12th grade.



Table 1.

A total of 773 high school students participated in the ECHS Program in 2018–2019.



Source. 2018–2019 AISD student enrollment records

COLLEGE READY ASSESSMENTS

A higher percentage of ECHS students than of students in the matched comparison group met college readiness (CR) criteria on the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) reading, writing, and math assessments (Figure 2). In addition, ECHS students met CR criteria for all TSI assessments at a higher rate (56%) than the rate expected for new ECHS campuses (i.e., Provisional ECHS). At the provisional level, TEA expected that at least 35% of ECHS students meet CR criteria in all TSI subjects.

However, the percentage of ECHS students who met CR criteria on the TSI math test (59%) was lower than the percentage of ECHS students who met CR on the TSI reading (93%) or writing (97%) assessments (Figure 2).

Methods

ECHS Student Recruitment

The TEA blueprint for ECHS implementation recommends that schools recruit and enroll higher percentages of students from minority groups that are under-represented in post-secondary institutions, compared with the percentages of these groups observed at the district level.

Matched Comparison Group

To evaluate ECHS students' performance in the TSI assessments, ECHS students' scores were compared with the scores of non-program high school students. Students in the comparison group ($n = 684$) attended the same campuses as ECHS students and were matched based on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and English learner status. Differences between program and comparison students were tested with a chi-square test of goodness of fit.

TSI Assessment Reporting

The TEA blueprint for the ECHS Program requires that TSI assessments be provided to students accepted into ECHS as early as possible to assess college readiness. Thus allowing students to begin college courses and allowing program staff to design individual instructional support plans for the students.

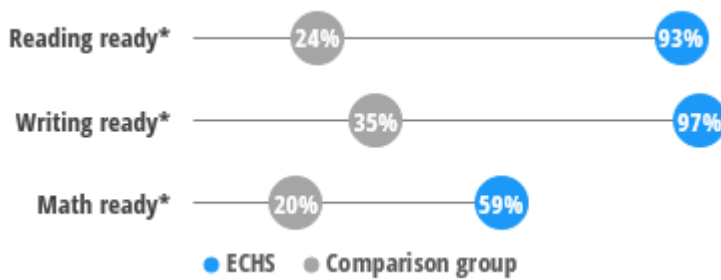
Students can take the TSI assessments multiple times until they meet CR criteria for each subject. This document reports students' highest TSI scores (across school years).

Staff Survey

In the spring of 2019, teachers and administrators at campuses that implemented ECHS were asked to provide feedback about the program via an electronic survey. A total of 533 teachers and administrators received a link to the survey, and 32% provided their feedback.

Figure 2.

A significantly larger percentage of ECHS students than of students from a comparison group met CR criteria in the TSI assessments.



Source. 2018–2019 AISD student records

* Significant differences were found using a chi-square test of goodness of fit, $p < 0.0001$.

Disaggregating TSI math results by grade level indicated that 77% of 12 graders ($n = 151$) met CR on the TSI math and 76% met CR criteria on all TSI subjects (Table 1). Across grade levels, more than 90% of ECHS students met CR on the TSI reading and more than 94% met CR criteria in the TSI writing.

Table 1.

Percentage of Students Who Met CR Criteria in the TSI Math and/or Reading

	Met college criteria			
	Math	Reading	Writing	All three subjects
9 th ($n = 119$)	55%	99%	100%	55%
10 th ($n = 253$)	40%	91%	97%	37%
11 th ($n = 250$)	69%	91%	94%	65%
12 th ($n = 151$)	77%	96%	97%	76%

Source. 2018–2019 AISD student records

When other college ready assessments (e.g., the Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT] and the American College Testing [ACT]) were taken into consideration, 60% of ECHS students across grade levels, and 79% of the 12th grade ECHS students were math ready, again suggesting that students may need time to take the course work and meet CR criteria in the math assessments, regardless of which assessment is being considered.

The TSI assessment was originally created for 11th grade and up, and it is likely that students entering ECHS in 9th grade may not have taken the associated course work yet. Consequently, these students need time to meet CR criteria on the math TSI.

DUAL-CREDIT COURSES

A significantly higher percentage of ECHS students (60%) than of students in the comparison group (4%) earned dual credits in 2018–2019 (Table 2). In addition, 81% of ECHS 11th graders and 79% of ECHS 12th graders earned at least one dual credit in high school. Across grade levels, ECHS students earned 2,233.5 dual credits in a span of 4 years from 2014–2015 through 2018–2019 (Table 3). In addition, when considering the core subject areas of dual-credit courses

earned by ECHS students, 58% of 11th graders and 62% of 12th graders earned at least one English dual credit. Seventeen percent of 11th graders and 21% of 12th graders earned at least one math dual credit. Overall, 62% of ECHS 12th graders earned high school credits for five or more dual-credit courses.

Table 2.

A significantly higher percentage of ECHS students than of students from a comparison group earned dual credit in 2018–2019 and throughout high school.

	All high school grade levels		12 th grade students	
	ECHS (<i>n</i> = 773)	Comparison group (<i>n</i> = 684)	ECHS (<i>n</i> = 151)	Comparison group (<i>n</i> = 124)
Percentage of students who earned dual credit in 2019	60%*	4%	59%*	10%
Percentage of students who earned dual credit anytime in high school	76%*	6%	79%*	17%
Sum of dual credits earned any-time in high school	2,233.5	62.5	737.5	40.5

Source. 2018–2019 AISD student enrollment records

* Significant differences were found using a chi-square test of goodness of fit, $p < 0.0001$.

Table 3.

Dual Credits Earned by ECHS Students in High School.

Grade level	Credits earned in high school
09	110
10	515.5
11	869.5
12	737.5
Total credits	2,233.5

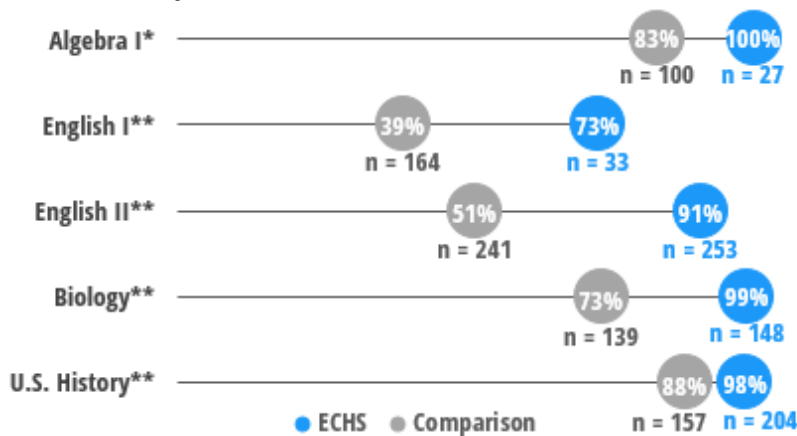
Source. 2018–2019 AISD student records

END-OF-COURSE (EOC) PERFORMANCE

There were significant differences in the EOC performance between ECHS and comparison students for all subject areas. In 2018–2019, ECHS students met passing standards at significantly higher rates than did comparison students for all EOC assessments (Figure 5). Except for English I EOC performance, more than 90% of ECHS students who took EOC assessments in 2018–2019 met standards for the assessment. A total of 560 ECHS students took the EOC tests in 2018–2019; of those, 21% were in 9th grade, 43% were in 10th grade, 36% were in 11th grade, and 1% were in 12th grade. It is required that students meet standards in all EOC tests to graduate from high school, unless a graduate committee approves graduation with up to two failed EOCs.

Figure 5.

A significantly larger percentage of ECHS students than of students from a comparison group met standards for each of the EOC subjects in 2018–2019.



Source. 2018–2019 AISD student enrollment records

Note. A total of 560 ECHS and 466 comparison students took EOC assessments in 2018–2019.

* Significant differences were found using a chi-square test of goodness of fit, $p < 0.05$.

** Significant differences were found using a chi-square test of goodness of fit, $p < 0.001$.

GRADUATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

Preliminary AISD graduation data for 2018–2019 indicated positive outcomes for ECHS participants. Of the 151 ECHS students in 12th grade, 97% graduated and 33% earned an associate’s degree. In addition, the percentage of 12th-grade ECHS students who graduated was significantly higher than the percentage of 12th graders in the comparison group (87%, $n = 124$) who did so.

As encouraged by the ECHS Program, 25% of the students in the program received industry certifications. Such certifications are developed by industry leaders to reflect the needs of real-world career expectations and to distinguish individuals with certifications from their peers when applying for jobs. Overall, ECHS students earned a total of 257 certifications across multiple school years from 2016–2017 to the present, and 124 (56%) of those certifications were earned in 2018–2019. In addition, the percentage of ECHS students who received certifications in high school was significantly higher than the percentage of students in the comparison group (17%) who did so.

Table 4.
Certifications Earned by ECHS Students in High School.

Certification field	Percentage
Health science	28%
Business management	20%
Construction technology	14%
Audio visual	12%
Auto Mechanics	9%
Graphic design	9%
Other	8%

Source. 2018–2019 AISD student records

Lastly, the largest group of certifications earned were in the fields of health science (28%) and business management (20%) and in construction technology (14%) (Table 4).

STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Overall, ECHS teachers and staff had positive perceptions of the program. Of the 172 ECHS staff who answered the survey, 77% indicated the ECHS Program was part of their campus culture, 78% felt they understood ECHS, and 77% knew whom to ask for additional information about the program. Lastly, of the survey respondents, 66% felt the program was promoted to parents, 78% felt it was often promoted to students, and 58% indicated it was discussed with community members.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The academic outcomes of ECHS implementation were positive. A total of 773 AISD high school students participated in the program, and by 2018–2019, the majority of ECHS students met CR criteria in all subjects of the TSI college ready assessment. In addition, the majority (73% to 100%, depending on the subject) of ECHS students who took EOC assessments in 2018–2019 met the passing standards, 97% of seniors graduated, 33% earned an associate’s degree, and 25% received an industry certification.

Despite several positive evaluation results, data analysis revealed areas for program improvement. The following recommendation is provided:

Given the low percentages of students who were classified as at risk of dropping out, who were English learners, and who had disabilities, compared with what was expected by TEA, it is recommended that program staff target program recruiting to those groups of students.

ECHS BACKGROUND

AISD expects that all students will graduate ready for college, career, and life in a globally competitive economy and is committed to providing all students with quality college and career preparation. In this effort, AISD has created a series of college and career readiness support services and programs. ECHS is one of such programs. ECHS provides students with the opportunity to take dual-credit courses and simultaneously earn a high school diploma and 60 college hours, which lead to an associate’s degree.

The TEA has developed a designation process for ECHS. This process ensures that districts and colleges operating ECHS campuses maintain the integrity of the program and continue to target and serve students who might not otherwise attend college (for more information, see the TEA website, https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College%2C_Career%2C_and_Military_Prep/Early_College_High_School).

The ECHS Program operates as a high school within high schools, and TEA recognizes three levels of ECHS implementation: provisional, designated, and distinguished. Each level requires that ECHS high schools demonstrate they can implement all design elements and increasingly stringent outcomes-based measure (OBMs) criteria. OBMs are data indicators related to access, achievement, and attainment (e.g., the percentage of ethnic minorities enrolled in

the program, the percentage of students who have met CR criteria in the TSI assessments, the percentage of students in 12th grade who graduate from high school).

The provisional title is used for new ECHSs. The Early College title is used for schools that have been able to maintain their provisional status and have met the designated Early College OBMs. The distinguished title is used for schools that have been designated early colleges for at least 5 years and have met the distinguished early college OBMs.

AISD high schools started implementing ECHS during different school years, and therefore had different levels of designation in 2018–2019. Eastside Memorial, Lanier, and Travis operated as provisional ECHS sites, whereas Crockett, LBJ, and Reagan operated as designated ECHS sites.

This report described the ECHS Program implementation at the district level, combining data from all six AISD campuses, and observing TEA’s requirements for the provisional level of implementation. Since ECHS campuses at AISD have started program implementation during different years and consequently are at different levels in the ECHS designation process, future reports will describe program implementation at the campus and district levels.

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January 2020
Publication 18.44